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ABSTRACT

Reported here is a two-year study of the use of a speech-output communication device, coupled with naturalistic language intervention, to facilitate language development of school-age children with severe mental retardation. Subjects were 13 children. The first section (chapters 1-4) outlines a conceptual framework for the project, gives an overview of the project's foundations, emphasizing its roots in animal communication research, profiles the subjects and their communication skills, describes parent and teacher perspectives at the outset of the project, and explains the system for augmenting language (SAL) used here. The second part focuses on findings from the project, translation into practice, and future directions for research. Chapters 5 and 6 detail the language and communicative achievements in the areas of communicative use of the SAL and vocabulary mastery and gains. Chapter 7 looks at the patterns of participant achievement, describes domains of change that often elude quantitative measurement (e.g., community inclusion, perceptions of others), and compares the results of this group with others without SAL experience. A program designed to use these findings as a basis for practice is described in chapter 8, and research directions are discussed in chapter 9. Contents are indexed. References are included with each chapter. (MSE)

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